



The E-Newsletter of the Senate Majority Caucus

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HOUSE, SENATE CONFEREES AGREE ON MAJOR EDUCATION BILL

Fact-Finding Effort

An unprecedented statewide discussion and months of fact-finding about public education in Hawaii has led to joint House and Senate agreement on an education omnibus bill that is expected to come up for a final vote on Thursday, April 15. The measure, SB 3238 CD1, was passed out of conference committee on April 13, and will be voted on after a mandatory 48-hour waiting period.

Meeting Student Needs

"We have worked to create a system that meets the needs of students better," said Senate Committee on Education Chair Sen. Norman Sakamoto (D-15th, Waimalu, Airport, Salt Lake). "This measure makes a lot of sense, and people want change." Senator Sakamoto emphasized that standardized test scores are only a snapshot of student achievement, and that the public school system should

look beyond testing to focus on "health and well-being, becoming a good citizen – more indicators that measure the whole person."

A 13-Point Plan

The measure has 13 principal components that will:

- Establish a weighted student formula.
- Provide additional information technology.
- Empower principals through a Hawaii principals academy and other means.
- Strengthen community involvement through school community councils and parent-community networking centers.
- Provide more mathematics textbooks.



- Lower class sizes in kindergarten, grade one, and grade two.
- Provide full-time, year-round student activity coordinators in each high school.
- Provide support for students who need additional help to succeed in school.
- Establish a National Board Certification incentive program for teachers.
- Enhance teacher education.
- Reduce the bureaucracy that hampers the effectiveness of the Department of Education.
- Improve the educational accountability system.
- Require the Board of Education members to hold community meetings in their districts.



Ice Bills Advance to Final Vote; Focus on Treatment, Prevention

A Treatment Gap

Two measures that reflect the findings of the Joint House-Senate Task Force on Ice and Drug Abatement are expected to pass a final vote in both houses of the Legislature before the end of the week. The bills (HB 2003 and HB 2004) address a public health problem that is heavily correlated with crime in Hawaii: the crystal methamphetamine epidemic. It is estimated that more than 6,000 ice

users need treatment but fewer than 3,000 are able to find publicly funded programs.

Substance Abuse Programs

Because of that treatment gap, HB 2003 provides for the diversion of first-time drug offenders to substance abuse programs, adds tort liability for drug dealers, amends the zero tolerance rule for public school students who are charged with drug offenses, and amends existing law to provide parity in health insurance benefits for substance abuse.

Crime Reduction

The second measure, HB 2004, appropriates \$13.2 million for crime reduction, prevention and treatment, including \$4,000,000 for adult treatment services, \$3,000,000 for school-based treatment programs, and \$2,000,000 for substance abuse prevention. Drug court programs will be extended through a \$1,499,688 appropriation, and \$1.2 million has been set aside for the expansion of existing drug court programs.

\$3.6 BILLION STATE BUDGET BILL SET FOR PASSAGE

Matching Funds to Programs

The conference committee that has met during the second week of April to outline the state's \$3.6 billion budget package has a heavy responsibility: "to ensure the most prudent, efficient, and effective distribution of state resources... [to provide for] the priorities of the people of Hawaii while maintaining fiscal discipline." The budget that is slated to pass its final vote on Thursday, April 15 reflects a determination to match legislative priorities in key areas to the current availability of funds.

Arbitrated Pay Raises

This year's budget, outlined in HB 1800 CD1, sets aside moneys for the arbitrated Hawaii Government Employees Association pay raise and provides for anticipated pay raises for the Hawaii State Teachers Association and the United Public Workers, both of which are still

negotiating their contracts with the state. It also provides some \$10.7 million for the first two years of the University of Hawaii Professional Assembly's six-year contract.

Priorities

Budget appropriations for this year reflect the Joint House-Senate Majority



Senate Majority Package bills, including education and ice omnibus bills, are moving rapidly toward final votes on the Senate floor as the 2004 legislative session moves into its final weeks.

Package emphasis on educational reinvention, the ice epidemic, and remedies for the high cost of prescription drugs.

Educational appropriations include \$2,500,000 for math textbooks and learning materials (almost double the current figure), \$2,143,350 to lower class size for kindergarten, first grade, and second grade, and \$25.8 million for charter schools. Ice bill appropriations reflect the Majority Package approach to the omnibus bill's proactive solutions as "a multipronged approach to the crisis."

Signs of Recovery

The conference committee report on the budget points to recent signs of economic recovery but advocates a prudent approach to expenditures, saying that "efforts to maintain tax reductions, protect our consumers, and continue to streamline government remain critical to stimulating our economy."

Senate Confirms Big Island Third Circuit Appointments



From left to right: Sen. Russell Kokobun, Sen. Lorraine Inouye, appointees Glenn Hara and Barbara K. Takase, Senate President Robert Bunda

Big Island Attorneys Chosen

The appointments of two new judges were confirmed by the Senate for the Big Island's Third Circuit on April 7. They are Circuit Court Judge Glenn Hara and District Court Judge Barbara K. Takase. Both appointees bring a wealth of

experience to their new jobs, having served as Big Island per diem judges and as attorneys in private practice.

Unanimous Confirmation

Hara, 57, is a longtime Hilo attorney who graduated from Hilo High School in 1964. He was confirmed by a unanimous vote. He is a Stanford University graduate who worked as a clerk at the State Supreme Court before spending four years in the Army as a judge advocate general. Upon his return to Hawaii, he worked at the state Attorney General's office and the Hawaii County Prosecutor's Office. He began his private practice in Hilo in 1979 and served as a per diem judge from 1982 to 1987.

Sen. Inouye Speaks in Support

In a speech on the Senate floor, Senator Lorraine Inouye (D-1st, Hamakua, S. Hilo) said, "Glenn S. Hara has sought

challenges all his life, and has met them with grace and skill. Mr. President, being a Circuit Court judge will be his greatest challenge to date, and he is well prepared to meet it."

Per Diem Experience Cited

Barbara K. Takase is an attorney who has specialized in real property, wills, trusts, and business law. She has served as a per diem judge in Big Island district and family courts since 1999. She is a former deputy prosecutor and hearings officer for the state Department of Education. Sen. Inouye said, "Ms. Takase is highly qualified for this post, with an impressive background that should prepare her well for the task ahead of her." Both candidates were recommended for the bench appointments by the Judicial Selection Commission.